



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **BELMONT STAKES CONTENDER ESSENTIAL QUALITY WORKS SHARP FIVE FURLONGS IN :59.80 AT CHURCHILL DOWNS**

**LOUISVILLE, KY (Saturday, May 22, 2021)** – Godolphin’s **Essential Quality**, the Kentucky Derby (Grade I) favorite and likely top betting choice for the June 7 Belmont Stakes (GI), breezed a sharp five furlongs in :59.80 Saturday morning at Churchill Downs, the fifth fastest of 40 horses at the distance.

Trained by **Brad Cox**, **Essential Quality** was the 5-2 favorite in the May 1 Kentucky Derby and crossed the wire fourth behind **Medina Spirit**, **Mandaloun** and **Hot Rod Charlie**.

The Tapit colt worked Saturday in company with 5-year-old graded stakes winner **Night Ops** through early fractions of :24.20 and :47.60, according to Churchill Downs clocker **John Nichols**.

There were 169 horses that donned the Saturday work tab at Churchill Downs including **Juddmonte’s Mandaloun** who cruised an easy half-mile in :48.20. His next start is still to be determined, according to Cox.

**GEROUX ENJOYING EARLY SPRING MEET SUCCESS** – Jockey **Florent Geroux** is enjoying his early success at the Churchill Downs Spring Meet and entered Saturday’s 11-race card one win behind **Tyler Gaffalione** for the top honors in the jockey standings.

The 34-year-old native of France recorded 17 wins from 64 mounts with purse earnings just shy of \$2.2 million.

“We had a very successful Kentucky Derby Week to begin the meet and we kept the momentum from there,” Geroux said. “We’re riding for some great owners and trainers and, most importantly, some live horses.”

Geroux’s early success at the meet helped him rise to third in overall North American purse earnings with \$7,880,342. He sits just behind **Irad Ortiz Jr.** and **Joel Rosario**.

Represented by **Doug Bredar**, Geroux was tabbed to ride eight horses Saturday night including the morning line favorites in both stakes events: **Frank’s Rockette** (6-5) in the \$150,000 Winning Colors (GIII) and **Delta’s Kingdom** (5-2) in the \$110,000 Keertana Overnight Stakes.

Geroux is seeking his first leading rider title at Churchill Downs.

**TV SCHEDULE** – Churchill Downs Racing is scheduled to air every race day on “**America’s Day at the Races**” on the Fox Sports family of networks. Here is this week’s TV Schedule:

- Saturday: Fox Sports 2 (1-3 p.m., 4-11:30 p.m.)
- Sunday: Fox Sports 2 (12:30-3 p.m., 4-5:30 p.m.)

**DOWN THE STRETCH** – Racing continued Saturday night at Churchill Downs for Downs After Dark presented by Budweiser. The special 6 p.m. start featured 11 races including the \$150,000 Winning Colors (GIII) and \$110,000 Keertana Overnight Stakes. There was a \$70,011 carryover in the 20-cent Derby City 6 and a \$2,844 carryover in the \$1 Super Hi 5. ... For more information about the Churchill Downs Spring Meet and to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.churchilldowns.com/calendar/featured-events/>.

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